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Book M416

Massachusetts Citizens

ADDRESS

TO THE

FREE AND INDEPENDENT PEOPLE

OF

MASSACHUSETTS.

1812

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ADDRESS, &c.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

A LARGE and respectable Convention of Citizens, from all parts of the Commonwealth, after ascertaining that our late worthy Governor CHRISTOPHER GORE declined being considered a Candidate for the Chair ; UNANIMOUSLY resolved to recommend to your suffrages the ensuing year, .

CALEB STRONG,

FOR GOVERNOR,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS,

FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR.

Upon the characters of these candidates, and their claims for office, it would be superfluous to enlarge. Governor STRONG for several years sustained the office of Chief Magistrate with dignity, ability, moderation and firmness. The office was respected, and the State was prosperous under his administration. Mr. PHILLIPS is a gentleman extensively known and respected in the Commonwealth, for his exemplary moral character, his deportment in public and private life ; for the steadiness of his principles, and the munificence of his charity.

During the current political year, the people of this Commonwealth have witnessed a state of affairs, entirely new in their annals, and equally alarming and unexpected.

The Governor, forgetful of the claim of the *whole people* to Executive Patronage, has condescended to devote himself not merely to gratify, but inflame the passions of the *Party* which supported his election, comprising a small and perhaps a doubtful majority of legal voters.

He began his administration the past year by denouncing, *in effect*, our ancient and faithful Metropolis, as an assemblage of Malecontents prepared to resist by open violence the Laws of their Country. He has also given currency to a reproach upon the whole State, by asserting the existence of a combination within its bosom, hostile to its Liberties, and sufficiently formidable to require public animadversion, which, under the dominion of "*foreign influence*," is engaged in plots of a treasonable complexion. By the sanction of such high authority, at an alarming juncture, when united talents and mutual confidence have become necessary to provide for the common defence, against impending WAR; jealousies are sown between Town and Country—The Commonwealth is degraded in the estimation of our Sister States, and encouragement is afforded to a foreign nation, in the event of a WAR, of finding numerous adherents among our own Citizens.

For this grievous accusation, unsupported by documents or evidence of any kind, the citizens implicated have afforded no pretence to his Excellency, except by their protestations against the ruinous tendency of the *Non-Importation System*, which is now declared by many of its former advocates, and by the most respectable members of the majority in Congress, to be utterly ineffectual, except for the purposes of fraud and perjury, and the consummation of our national ruin.

To confirm the power of this party, the Governor has co-operated with the Legislature in a plan of pretended reformation, which threatens the freedom of speech and even of opinion, and is at variance with the first elements of a free constitution.

It is the professed basis of this plan, *that a difference in political opinion from the present administration disqualifies a man for the service of the state in any department, civil or military, elevated or humble.*

In consequence of this new theory, laws have been modelled with an express view to *create* new offices, and to change the tenure of old ones, held by Judges, Sheriffs, Clerks of Judicial Courts and other subordinate officers, merely to make room by their removal for successors of different political principles.

In pursuance of this system, the new offices, with a very few exceptions, have been engrossed by individuals of one political party, generally nominated by secret assemblies of men without responsibility. Old and approved servants of the Public, whose locks have whitened in the duties of the cabinet and the field; officers in the revolutionary army, aged members of Congress, and other faithful and able men, have been driven from their places, without any imputation *but the crime of opinion*, and doomed to wear out the remnant of their days in unmerited poverty and distress.

But this projected reformation will not be limited merely to the removal of officers, and to the increase of executive patronage—It is destined by its authors to pervade every department, civil, judicial and military—Already it has sapped the foundation of our most venerable institutions. The Supreme Judicial Court is threatened in terms of open menace. The jurisdiction of that Court in constitutional questions is denied, and its decisions in many instances are doubted and censured. It is proposed to divide the Commonwealth into Districts, so as to secure in the Senate the permanent ascendancy of the party, without respect to any change which the will of the people may effect in the other departments of government. By this proposed division, a perfect contempt is manifested for immemorial usage, geographical boundaries, local convenience, and “the proportion of the public taxes paid by the respective Districts.” Counties are divided into sections in the most irregular and inconvenient forms, so that further divisions may be facilitated in order to detach from each other old friends and associates, who have been in the habit of acting together for the common good—Towns have been carved into parts upon the application of minor portions of the inhabitants, by lines arbitrary and capricious, separating from each other families and intimate connections, calculated merely to break down the influence of the respectable and steady part of the population. The Treasury has been opened for the pay of the Representatives, so that the number, already too unwieldy for the despatch of public business, may be increased to an

enormous bulk, rendering impracticable all fair deliberation, and compelling the many to be led blindfold by the few. This measure will operate as a wanton dissipation of public money, to prevent the due execution of public business. In short, the maxim is established, "overturn and overturn," until every vestige of our ancient habits and institutions shall be effaced, and until the substantial and independent men of all parties shall be driven from a participation in the government, and those who, by talents, property, sound principles, or honest hearts, are best qualified to influence the course of affairs, shall be supplanted by the bold, aspiring, and unprincipled part of the community, in every parish, town, and county. To justify these enormous strides towards the worst species of despotism, nothing can be alledged against the minority, but their opposition to the system of commercial restrictions imposed by our national rulers; and the fruits of which are already seen, in the ruin of Commerce, the approach of War, Standing Armies, the whole system of Internal Taxes, including a LAND TAX and a STAMP ACT, an empty Treasury, and future prospects more dismal than present embarrassments. It would be tedious in an address of this description to attempt an elaborate review of the measures which have changed the joy of our nation into mourning; but it will not be impertinent to remind you of the principles avowed by the friends of WASHINGTON, in relation to the obnoxious Orders and Decrees of the belligerent powers, that you may perceive distinctly wherein they are culpable:—

These principles are—

First—That in the present state of Europe and of America, neither the honor or interest of this nation required us to embark in the War, but that it was our policy to husband our resources, to glean whatever might be gathered from the remnant of our commerce, and to prepare for a more favorable occasion of vindicating our rights.

Secondly—That resistance to one or more of the belligerents, by means of *commercial restrictions*, would be

ineffectual—That *France* would be gratified, Britain irritated, and that this irritation would probably produce further aggressions, and finally open *War*.

This species of resistance, however, is that which Government has hitherto eluded; and this has been opposed by argument and remonstrances on our part. It is on this ground alone, that the Governor and his coadjutors can attempt to justify their violence and innovations.

Now it has so happened, that actual experience has brought home to the understanding of every man in the country a conviction of *THE TRUTH of this last proposition*—and of consequence *the Metropolis and the Federal Party have been denounced, for stating what the whole people now realizes to be true, and for no other cause.*

That this system of restrictions has drained the country of wealth, and rendered us less prepared for War, is clear from the most humiliating evidence from the best authority. The Secretary at War (doubtless with the approbation of the President) proclaims to the world, that so far from having made provision for an immense army, he cannot procure blankets to cover the nakedness of the Savages. The *Secretary of the Treasury* also is compelled to fill up the measure of our degradation, by exhibiting the emptiness of the Treasury, and by proposing taxes which he formerly considered the most odious and oppressive, and which nothing but dire necessity could have induced him to recommend.

To all this evidence may be added, the observations made by the principal leaders of the ruling party in Congress; condemning the wretched policy of their own friends—condemning themselves, acknowledging the inefficacy of their system, and censuring the administration in terms of bitterness never equalled by those of their adversaries.

Thus, Fellow-Citizens, you have a plain view of the only justification which the modern Reformers can allege for shaking old Massachusetts to the base—for disturbing the institutions of your ancestors, and for engrossing all power in their hands. It is, let it be repeated, the Federalists that have warned them of consequences

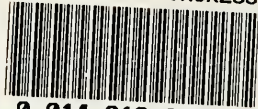
which are now realized by dreadful experience, and have condemned a policy of which its authors now repent, though they have not the magnanimity to renounce it. It is these men, and not the Federalists, who have exhibited to G. Britain, and to the world, the humiliating view of the state of our country.

It is now for you, for the honest and moderate men of all parties, to decide whether you will uphold this reign of TERROR and PROSCRIPTION—Look now at the conduct of the *friends of Washington*, in Congress—You see them with silent sorrow acquiesce and assist in preparation for a War, which they have done all in their power to prevent—A war which they believe to be unnecessary and ruinous, but in which, if it happens, they are ready to engage as citizens of a Common Country—But you must also perceive that while an enormous army is voted, and all naval assistance is denied, that the protection or vindication of our commercial rights, is a stale and shallow pretence.—No, Fellow-Citizens, the object is to keep alive the existing irritations against Britain, and to break down the commercial strength and spirit of Massachusetts, by continued restrictions. The men in power in this State, play into their hands, with a view merely to keep their places, and persecute their political opponents. It will be difficult for them to point out any advantage resulting to the Country since they have had power. Let your plundered Treasury attest to the fidelity of the first man they had the power to elect, and let the frauds and forgeries committed in the East and the West by their greatest and most confidential men be an earnest of your future hopes, when all power shall be in their hands.

Moderate men, friends to your Country of all parties, unite—The real differences of sentiment between *you*, are not great—If you are doomed to a state of war, you must fight in the same ranks—If peace can be preserved, all your wisdom will be in requisition to heal the wounds inflicted by a mistaken policy—But if you will not unite, your Commerce perishes, your Agriculture decays, your Commonwealth sinks, your Liberties are no more.

Boston, Feb. 21, 1812.

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